

Remarks

The various parts of the Office Action (and other matters, if any) are discussed below under appropriate headings.

Specification

The Examiner is objecting to the recitation “the at least one frame member” in claim 32 as lacking proper antecedent basis.

In response to this objection, claim 32 is being amended so as to omit this recitation.

35 USC 102

The Examiner is alleging that the subject-matter of claims 1 to 5, 11, 13 to 19, 27 to 31, 34, 39 and 40 is anticipated by Podlipec et al (US-6038969).

This is not the case. Nevertheless, in the interests of expediency, the independent claims (claims 1, 39 and 40) are being further amended so as more clearly to distinguish the subject-matter of claims 1, 39 and 40, and these independent claims will each be considered in turn below.

Claim 1

Claim 1 now requires inter alia that the or each frame member comprises a plurality of engagement elements disposed along a length of the supporting frame element, and that each of the engagement elements is pivotable independently of the other.

Support for this amendment can be found, for example, in claim 11, and at page 9, lines 6 to 15 of the specification.

The Examiner has identified the flattened edges (12) in Podlipec et al as providing the plurality of engagement elements of claim 1, but the flattened edges (12) are part of the hooking pins (6), which are fixed to the single tensioning bar (5).

This configuration manifestly does not allow for the flattened edges (12) to be pivotable independently of the other, in the manner as now required by claim 1.

Claim 39

Claim 39 now requires inter alia that the mounting surface is that surface at which a respective edge of a fitted printing screen is engaged, and that the at least one

biasing element is configured to apply a biasing force to the biasing arm of the at least one engagement element in a direction substantially orthogonal to the mounting surface.

Support for this amendment can be found, for example, at page 10, lines 1 to 5 of the specification.

It is noted that the Examiner considered an outer, side surface of the frame (1) of Podlipec et al as providing the mounting surface of claim 39, and, in this regard, claim 39 is being amended to define more clearly that the mounting surface is contrarily that surface at which a respective edge of a fitted printing screen is engaged.

The Examiner is alleging that the tensioning tube (4) of Podlipec et al, which is considered by the Examiner to provide the biasing element of claim 39, provides for such orthogonal biasing of the tensioning bar (5), which is considered by the Examiner to provide the biasing arm of claim 39.

This is absolutely not the case. Contrarily, in Podlipec et al, the tensioning tube (4) applies a force which is parallel to the mounting surface of the frame (1); the mounting surface being that surface at which an edge (8) of the stencil (9) is engaged.

Claim 40

Claim 40 now requires inter alia that the mounting surface is that surface at which a respective edge of a fitted printing screen is engaged, and that the biasing arm of the at least one engagement element has a principal component extending parallel to the mounting surface.

Claim 40 is being amended similarly to claim 39 to define more clearly that the mounting surface is that surface at which a respective edge of a fitted printing screen is engaged.

The Examiner is alleging that the tensioning bar (5) of Podlipec et al, which is considered by the Examiner to provide the biasing arm of claim 40, has a principal component which extends parallel to the mounting surface.

This is absolutely not the case. Contrarily, in Podlipec et al, the tensioning bar (5) extends orthogonally to the mounting surface; the mounting surface being that surface at which an edge (8) of the stencil (9) is engaged.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the subject-matter of the independent claims (claims 1, 39 and 40) is patentably distinguished over the disclosure of Podlipec et al.

As regards the dependent claims (claims 2 to 5, 11, 13 to 19, 27 to 31 and 34), it is submitted that these claims are allowable, in being dependent upon an allowable independent claim (claim 1).

35 USC 103

Claims 6, 7 and 38

The Examiner is alleging that the subject-matter of claims 6, 7 and 38 is unpatentable over Podlipec et al in view of Hillstrom et al (US-4580361). This is not the case.

Claims 6 and 7 are dependent upon an allowable independent claim (claim 1), and, as such, it is submitted that these claims are themselves allowable.

As regards claim 38, although the applicant disagrees with the Examiner's objection, in the interests of expediency, claim 38 is being cancelled, thus rendering the objection to this claim moot.

Claims 8 to 10, 12, 20 to 23, 33 and 41

The Examiner is alleging that the subject-matter of claims 8 to 10, 12, 20 to 23, 33 and 41 is unpatentable over Podlipec et al in view of Williams (US-6289804). This is not the case.

Claims 8 to 10, 12, 20 to 23 and 33 are dependent upon an allowable independent claim (claim 1), and, as such, it is submitted that these claims are themselves allowable.

As regards claim 41, claim 41 requires inter alia that the at least one biasing element is operative to apply a permanent biasing force to the biasing arm of the at least one engagement element to bias the at least one engagement element to pivot in the tensioning sense and tension a fitted printing screen.

The Examiner has acknowledged that Podlipec et al fails to disclose such a biasing element, but is alleging that it would have been obvious to the skilled person to modify the frame (1) of Podlipec et al in accordance with the teaching of Williams to provide the coil springs (9) of Williams in place of the tensioning tubes (4) of Podlipec et al.

This modification of Podlipec et al is not possible. In the frame (1) of Podlipec et al, the tensioning tubes (4) cannot be replaced by coil springs (9) which provide a permanent biasing force, as then the frame (1) of Podlipec et al would include no means for enabling the mounting/de-mounting of the stencil (9), insofar as the tensioning bars (5) would be permanently outwardly biased.

Furthermore, it is an expressly stated objective of Podlipec et al to provide the tensioning means as an inflatable tube which is operated by a pressure fluid [see, for example, column 1, lines 40 to 60 and column 1, lines 61 to 65].

It is submitted that to modify the frame of Podlipec et al in the manner suggested by the Examiner, that is, to use the coil springs (9) of Williams in place of the tensioning tubes (4) of Podlipec et al, would be entirely contrary to the express teaching of Podlipec et al, and would not have been contemplated by the skilled person absent an impermissible hindsight analysis of the prior art.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the subject-matter of claim 41 is patentably distinguished over the disclosures of Podlipec et al and Williams.

Allowable Subject-Matter

It is noted with appreciation that the Examiner has indicated that claims 24 to 26 are allowable.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, request is made for timely issuance of a notice of allowance.

The absence in this reply of any comments on any other contentions set forth in the Office Action should not be construed to be an acquiescence therein. Rather, no comment is needed since the rejections should be withdrawn for at least the foregoing reasons.

Respectfully submitted,

RENNER, OTTO, BOISSELLE & SKLAR, LLP

/Don W. Bulson/
By _____
Don W. Bulson, Reg. No. 28,192

1621 Euclid Avenue
Nineteenth Floor
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
(216) 621-1113
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